

Chris Donnelly  
58 Old Post Road  
Northford, CT 06472

**Re: Governor's Bill #6375**

I would like to go on record as stating my opposition to the termination of the **Tree Protection Examining Board, the Connecticut Forest Practices Advisory Board and the Invasive Plant Council**, as is called for in **Governor's Bill # 6375 – An Act Concerning the Review and Termination of Certain Boards and Commissions**. I know each of these bodies to be important, active and useful entities within state government. I believe that the termination of these bodies would hamper the work of the state with regards to those issues for which each of these bodies were individually established. I also believe that, with particular reference to the Tree Protection Examining Board, that the elimination of this body would cause direct harm to the professional group that depends upon the existence of this body.

Let me take each one of these bodies one at a time:

The **Tree Protection Examining Board** was established by the General Assembly in 1919 and will be 90 years old on July 1. This Board has been and continues to be a prime example of an industry and a profession cooperating with government for the public good. The Tree Protection Examining Board has two main functions. Through a testing process, it recommends candidates who are qualified for the arborist license to DEP for licensing. It also works with DEP to establish the standards for what is deemed proper tree care – arboriculture – in the state.

That second function is critical. Arboriculture is a rapidly growing and rapidly changing field nationally and within the State of Connecticut. Over the past decade, the number of licensed arborists in Connecticut has increased by around 80% - from around 500 to about 900 individuals. This increase in numbers is due in large part to the importance that the public – the citizens of the State of Connecticut – place on proper tree care.

At the same time, while the number of arborists has increased, the profession of arboriculture has also not stood still. There have been major advances – in the approach taken to the use of pesticides as well as to the materials used in treating trees for pest problems; in the techniques used to climb, prune and improve trees, both above and below ground; and in the approach taken to safety among the industry generally.

In all of these areas, including that of safety, the Tree Protection Examining Board has been that body which has allowed the licensing entity, DEP, to stay current with practices in the field. With specific reference to safety, the tree care industry has made enormous strides over the years, creating voluntary standards for safe practices. These standards are incorporated in an American National Standards Institute document (ANSI Z-133.1). Through the efforts of the Tree Protection Examining Board, candidates for the arborist license, who would then have supervisory responsibility over tree work, are now required demonstrate knowledge of this standard and of safe tree care practices.

Without the efforts of the Tree Protection Examining Board, it is very likely that this incorporation of safety into the licensing standards would never have occurred, or certainly would not have occurred in a timely fashion.

I suppose it might be suggested that safety and currency in a licensing exam are a luxury, if this Board actually cost the State a large sum of money. In fact, the expenses associated with the body are minimal. To my understanding, they range in vicinity of \$500 a year total, for incidental expenses such as travel. Otherwise, the public and professional members of the Board are volunteering their time to the State.

The **Forest Practices Advisory Board** is a very similar body, established by the State Legislature in 1991 for very similar purposes regarding the State's woodlands, especially those woodlands in private ownership. Essentially, it was perceived that those woodlands are a vulnerable component of the State's landscape and that efforts needed to be made to protect those woodlands and their owners from the activities of those who are unscrupulous, ignorant or both.

This board is another example of a public-private partnership that has been very active over its history, and that continues to be active today. This board has worked hard to oversee the establishment of the certification process for those who conduct such forest practices as writing forest management plans and harvesting timber. It has also made recommendations as to the proper standards regarding field forestry activities, such as the correct ways to harvest; and was instrumental in establishing a code of ethical standards for those who are certified as a forest practitioner.

Again, it is difficult to see how these standards and recommendations would have been achieved, much less accepted by the larger forestry community, if they had been left to arise through the internal processes of a governmental agency. The dialogue, among state agency personnel, field practitioners, and interested members of the public, is crucial, to the Forest Practices Advisory Board being successful, but, much more importantly, to the State of Connecticut being successful in what it has sought to achieve with regards to forest practices.

The **Invasive Plant Council** was founded in 2003 to deal with what many perceive as one of our most significant environmental problems – that of invasive, non-native plants displacing native vegetation across the countryside. Six years ago, the Invasive Plant Council was given a bold mission, and it has made many notable strides towards accomplishing that mission. Six years ago, the topic of invasive plants was a highly polarized one, in which there was more energy devoted to blame than to solutions. The State was in great need of a coordinated effort with regards to invasive plants that would engage the many disparate parties concerned this issue. Through the Council, this has happened.

That the State has valued the success of the Invasive Plant Council thus far is demonstrated best by the General Assembly's support, in the 2007 session, through PA 07-822, for an annual budget to fund the work championed by the Council. The General Assembly would not have voted to provide this funding if it did not find the work of the Council important or if it were not satisfied with the efforts or direction the Council was taking.

However, in many ways, the work of this Council is just beginning – it might be said that, despite its notable successes, the Council has barely had time to get its feet on the ground. The most important work of this group is clearly ahead of it, and it needs the time to continue to make progress towards its important goals.

**In sum**, the commonality among these boards is that they are each a successful collaboration among industry, professionals, the public and state government. In a participatory democracy, successes such as these should be heralded as government at its finest. These are each very active, progressive and accomplished bodies that continue to do good for the state, for extremely low-cost, and that should be honored, and not terminated, for their efforts.

Sincerely,



Chris Donnelly